

Interview H0215: with Shakabpa, Wangchug Denden [tib. zhwa sgab pa, dbang phyug bde ldan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 1 of 13

W.D. Shakabpa was a very prominent aristocratic government official who held the rank of Tsipön. He is the author of "Tibet: A Political History." The interviewee tells how he was sent to Kham with his uncle Trekhang Trunyichemmo where he openly worked as a doctor, but actually was on a secret mission to inspect the regiments in Kham and to take photos in the Chinese occupied areas in Xining. He also discussed in detail about the events surrounding the 13th Dalai Lama's death and about Kujar's arrest and the meeting that appointed the new Regent. He also discusses the mass desertion of the Drongdrag soldiers and the sending of troops to protect the Trapchi mint-armory during this period. He also tells how the 13th Dalai Lama appointed his uncle Trekhang as the Governor General of Kham and Northern Tibet and how Trekhang stopped going to the office after Kujar's fall and later resigned and stayed as a khenche until his death.

Q

I would like to request that you to tell me all that happened after the 13th Dalai Lama died as you personally experienced it. Not from books. Here comes the first question, When the 13th Dalai Lama passed away, I think you were in Lhasa, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Were you a government official?

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A

I was not an [full] official in the government. The way I joined the government was very unusual. The 13th Dalai Lama passed away in the Water-Bird Year. It was in 1933. I was employed in the government service 3 years before the Great 13th passed out. I was in the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment but I did not have to serve as a soldier because my maternal uncle, the [Trunyichemmo](#) Ngöshiwa [tib. dngos gzhi ba], was working in the [Trapchi](#) [tib. grwa bzhi] Office. He was a very close friend of the personal attendant of the Dalai Lama (known as Kujar). I had studied Tibetan medicine and therefore I was told to work as a doctor in the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment. Consequently, I did not have to participate in the drills, parades and other such military exercises and I was given the salary of a [gyagpön](#). Probably, this was an internal plan (my uncle worked out) but I did not know. I was only a kid.

Then in the Year of the Sheep, when the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment was almost established, there was some unrest in Kham. I was sent on a secret mission. My mission was to keep a tight watch on our regiments and to study the weapons used by the Chinese regiments. That was my secret instructions, so I needed an excuse. From the beginning, I knew how to take photos. So to the outside world, I was sent to the British Indian government's Office (Dekyi Linga) to learn First Aid. Then I was told to go to our various regiments to practice First Aid. That was Kujar's plan. It was not a plan from the Dalai Lama and the Kashag. My maternal uncle probably might have had something (to do with me getting this), but I did not know it.

Kujar called me in and instructed me to go to Dekyi Linga where Mr. White was the then the Political Officer of Sikkim. Kujar had asked him about this. There was a doctor from whom I was to learn "First Aid" though I had already learned Tibetan Medicine. It was just a cover. The plan was to send me to Kham to teach First Aid as there were a lot of disturbances in Kham. My late maternal uncle was appointed as the Changji. The situation in Kham was very tense and lots of our younger government officials were sent with them. These officials had their own young men accompanying them like bodyguards (Apdru). "My maternal uncle was sent off with bodyguards and a cannon regiment.

Q

Was he the [Kalön](#) Lama Trekhang who was then the Senior [Kalön](#)?

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A

No. He was one of the [Trunyichemmo](#). He was our maternal uncle and I was sent along with them and I was told to go take photos. My cover designation was as a First Aid teacher. This was just for showing to the outside. My real job was to photograph both our regiments as well as the Chinese regiments. Furthermore, I was to report any errors, weaknesses and flaws I noticed in our regiments. I was also told to take photographs of the weapons of the Xining Chinese. That was my real job. This was carried out under Kujar's instruction. He gave this instruction to me in [Norbulinga](#).

Q

How were you supposed to photograph the Xining Chinese weapons and so on?

A

When my late maternal uncle was going there as the opponent of the Xining Chinese, I was sent there. I was able to photograph our own regiments. I was sent on an inspection tour by my late uncle. It was made clear to me that the order was neither given by the Dalai Lama nor the government. But people could guess that there were 2 persons - me and Joktre [tib. lcog bkras]. Joktre was sent to inspect the regiments located below [tib. mas 'dabs] [the jurisdiction of] the Doji and I was going to the regiments in the areas above [tib. yas 'dabs] the Doji.

Q

When you say above the Doji's domain, which areas do you mean?

A

The areas beyond/below the Doji included Nyarong [tib. nyag rong], Markham [tib. smar khams] and Derge [tib. sde dge]. I inspected Doshül [tib. mdo shul], Nangchen [tib. nang chen], Tengchen [tib. steng chen] and Chamdo [tib. chab mdo]. We were to inspect how the regiments were functioning and what was the condition of their arms and ammunition. That was about all. However, my main job was to photograph and listen to information concerning the regiments. The secret reports were dispatched to Lhasa. Otherwise, I didn't have much responsibility.

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When I was leaving for Kham area, my uncle had to do his [thönja](#) audience since he was a government official, but this did not apply to me. My uncle used to say that I was his assistant who was helping him in his work. To outsiders, it also seemed like this, but my main mission was to make the photographs and at the same time and teach First Aid to the army medical personnel. I received my medical kit and the photography equipment through the [Pandatsang](#) [tib. spom mda' tshang] family. When the people were taking their departure audience. I was instructed to wait near the Northern gate at 1 o'clock. So I was waiting there. The name of the Dalai Lama's room was called Kelsang Dekyi [tib. skal bzang bde skyid]. The Dalai Lama and Kujar were descending from the steps. I was waiting. the Dalai Lama just glanced at me and strolled into the gardens. He was dressed in a [chupa](#) with collar and openings on both sides called Tselchuma [tib. tshal phyu ma].

Then Kujar came towards me and said, "You will be given your medical kit and photographic equipment by [Pandatsang](#). Do your job well. Do it in absolute secrecy." Then he gave me a jigje mahe and a jagö blessed by the Dalai Lama.

That was all. I was to leave with my late uncle on the day after tomorrow. I was like his attendant, so my dress was not so elaborate and hanging down like that of a [kudrak](#). I was wearing a [hat](#) called "Wang Lemo," but my rank was higher than that of a mere attendant. It was a strange position. I was sending my reports regularly to my uncle's secretary. Now it was a very difficult and dangerous time, so I was not able to penetrate into the Chinese area. The situation was very explosive and neither side could cross over to the other's without mortal danger, so I could not go. Later on they agreed to peaceful negotiations. When this treaty was definitely arranged, I was appointed as the bearer of the seal (tib. thamzin [tham 'dzin]) which meant I had to carry the box in which the seal was kept [tib. thamgam [tham sgam]]. I was appointed to this post by my uncle and not by the government. The people who used the seal were Dzasa Surkhang Surpa who was then the [depön](#) of the [Jadang](#) Regiment and [tsidrung](#) Chongye Ngawang Lodrö [tib. 'phyongs rgyas ngag dbang blo gros] who was the person in charge of Riwoche who was called the Riwoche Lanyer [tib. ri [bo](#) che bla gnyer].

When they held the negotiations, I was the official seal bearer and sealed the documents. On that occasion I was allowed to take as many photographs as I wished. I was there during the talks. Being the seal bearer, I was like the real representative of the Changji. The Chinese gave me good quarters to stay. Being the representative of the Changji, keeping the keys of the seal box and the seals of the office, I was regarded highly. So I said, "Since we have finished our settlement, allow me to photograph the regiment and

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the prison quarters." They said, "Go as you wish." The military officer [tib. dmag dpon] of the [Chinese] regiment was named Ma Xuan Jeshi. He was an experienced short old man from the Xining area. There was another man who spoke English. He was said to be the Chief of Staff [ch. cam mou] all their names are recorded in the book. I had the opportunity to photograph them.

I went to the prison where the Second Rupön Narag and [Sandu](#) [tib. sa 'du] were imprisoned. We went to see them before they were handed over to us. I took their photographs with their prison uniform on and recorded the handing over ceremony. I also took photos when the treaty [tib. chings yig] was signed, and the military installations, their cavalry, arms and ammunition, prison camps and so on. I had the opportunity to photograph to my heart's content. I could make an album after I returned. As I developed the photos I dispatched them. When we returned, it was the 5th Tibetan month. A year after that, the Dalai Lama passed away and I was staying as a doctor in the Drondrag Regiment with a salary and the rank of a [gyagpön](#). So you see, I was like a government official, but at the same time not a regular one. It was like that - unusual. At that time, Ngabö was the Rupön [of the regiment]. Taring [tib. phreng ring] was an acting [depön](#). It was while the Dalai Lama was alive. So, you see, when the Dalai Lama passed away, I was in Lhasa.

If you look at my family relations - they are like this: I am closely related to the late Trekhang [Kalön](#) Lama who was my mother's brother from the same parents. The [Trunyichemmo](#) was my maternal uncle. He was related to my mother.

So one day I went to see [Sawangchemmo](#) in [Norbulinga](#). He was not there so I asked where he had gone. He had gone to [Nechung](#). Probably, at that time he was sick, so I did not see him that day. Again when I went the next day, the late [Trunyichemmo](#) came from the [Yigtsang](#). He looked tired and in pain. He sat down, grunting at the pain. I asked him, "What happened?" I could talk quite informally with him since I previously went with him as his attendant. What is ailing you? I asked. "I am a little unwell," he replied.

Sawang Chemo had gone to [Nechung](#) to call on the oracle. At that time, probably, the [Nechung](#) oracle went into trance. He was the [Tseja](#). The day after that or on the same day, the Dalai Lama passed away. I did not meet my late uncle. After I had come back to Lhasa, in the evening at around 5-6 p.m., just before it became dark, messages arrived about the Dalai Lama's death. It was around dusk. On hearing the news, commotion broke out. In the [Barkor](#), the Korchagpa were shouting in grief saying that the Dalai Lama has passed away so all the prayer flags should be lowered and the curtains and the fringes on

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the houses should be taken down. Bells and other ornaments on horses, etc. were also not allowed.

My mother and brother were there. My late mother was very worried. At once we went out with our mother to the [Jokhang](#) to offer butter lamps. The [Jokhang](#) was full of grief-stricken people, lighting butter lamps with tears running down their cheeks. Then the drums sounded, announcing the commencement of the religious rites. We were inside the [Jokhang](#). That is all I know about the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. I had no inside information, so I did not know the cause of his death or how he passed away.

The next day, I went to [Norbulinga](#). I frequently went to see my late uncle and at that time they were holding many meetings there. [Sawang](#) Trimön was my paternal uncle and the late [Tseja](#) was my mother's brother who was later promoted to [Kalön](#) Lama. Slowly we heard bits of news from my two uncles - about the meetings and how [the lay official] Chalu suggested that Kujar should be made the Regent. A few others suggested instead that there should be an assistant to Langdön, who was then the Prime Minister, but was very young. The monastic representatives would not accept this. I cannot give you more details since I do not know. The little I know, I have written in my book.

My late maternal uncle told me that since he was the [Tseja](#), he was sent by the Tsondu to bring in Kujar for questioning. At that time, probably, they had started investigating about Kujar. I think there was a meeting 2 days before it was decided that he should be arrested. I remember this very clearly because of an incident my maternal uncle told me. One day, the [Tseja](#), my paternal uncle and the [drönyerchemmo](#) Kokpo [tib.?] were sleeping in a room at [Norbulinga](#). Kokpo was sleeping next to my uncle. All of a sudden, Kokpo gave a shout and groaned. They asked him, "What's wrong?" He said that he was vomiting. Before they could do anything he passed away. He died on the day when the talks were going on.

Q

Why did that happen?

A

Later on, there was a lot of talk but at that time nothing was clear. So, the next day there was no [drönyerchemmo](#). So, an acting [drönyerchemmo](#) [tib. mgron tshab] was appointed. This incident took place during that time. However, I heard about this from my late uncle [Sawang](#) and I did not witness this personally. Then the meeting sent my uncle to bring

Kujar and he went to the top of the stable where Kujar was staying. He requested him gently, asking him if he has a gun in his pouch, and if so, he should hand over it or leave it behind. He had a pistol called Sahikha and he at once handed it over to my uncle. My uncle was accompanied by Chapa [tib. cha pa] and some soldiers from the Gusung Regiment. So my late uncle went in alone and no one was with him. Kujar became quite nervous and his complexion changed but he said, "I shall come at once." Later on, a lot of talk went on in the meeting and my late uncle disclosed them to me.

Q

Chapa Rusur told the Tsondu that Kujar had come to shoot him but he managed to snatch the gun away from him and Kujar shouted "Tseja, [Tseja](#)!" bewildered.

A

Yes, there was a story like that. We also discussed about it when we were having breakfast. The late [Tseja](#) said that it was not true. Kujar did not attack Chapa, but in fact he handed over the pistol voluntarily. Whatever the case may be, my late uncle told me that he was the person who brought in Kujar. After about 10 or 15 days, Kujar was arrested.

Q

The date and time of the arrest is not clear, what might have been the reason?

A

I do not know the dates exactly.

Q

What I have heard is that since the 13th Dalai Lama had passed away and the Prime Minister Langdön was very young, it was suggested that a monk and a lay official should be appointed to assist him. Another group suggested that since they all knew whom the late 13th Dalai Lama trusted [Kujar], there was no need to go into lengthy discussions. Another group said that it was absolutely necessary to appoint an Assistant to the Prime Minister, but the 13th Dalai Lama passed away suddenly without anyone informing us about his illness, this did not enable us to perform any proper rites and prayers. So it was more important to discuss how such a breach was allowed to be made. This was the

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affair where Kujar, the Doctor Chamba [tib. byams pa] and [Nechung](#) oracle were held responsible. Can you tell me how these sequences happened?

A

In the year of Water-Bird on the 30th of the 10th month, the 13th Dalai Lama passed away. I think the meetings commenced on the 1st and 2nd and they were held every day. I am not definite about these dates. At first the talks were mainly about putting up a suitable Assistant, like a kind of lama, to the young [lay] Prime Minister or the suggestions were made that the Prime Minister and the Kashag should work together. Chalu said that the late Dalai Lama's most trusted officer was Kujar.

Q

Which Chalu?

A

He was the Tshipön. He said that on the first day of the meeting.

Q

Was not it [Kapshöba](#)?

A

I didn't hear about [Kapshöba](#) saying this.

Q

Wasn't [Kapshöba](#) a Tshipön?

A

He wasn't.

Q

Was he a fourth rank?

A

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I don't have anything to tell you about this. When Chalu suggested that Kujar should be appointed as the new helper to the Prime Minister, a lot of people resented this suggestion. They said that we should never follow such a course when we already have a Prime Minister. Instead, we should concentrate on performing the ritual prayers and last rites for the late Dalai Lama. For a day or two the talks continued on such subjects.

The talks about how the Dalai Lama passed away had not arisen yet. After that, the talk about the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment arose. Since the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment consisted of sons of the well-off families, they had never liked the idea of spending their lives in the regiment. Now was a good time [to do something about that] and rumors were spread among them that they should ask for permission to leave for good. On the 3rd or 4th day, they staged a mass walkout.

Q

I think it was on a Saturday when they started leaving the regiment.

A

I think until the [Drongdrag](#) started their desertion, the talk about Kujar had not started. Of this, I am definite. At that time I had a talk with [Sawang](#) Trimön and Jangra [tib. lchang ra] who was the [depön](#) of the Gusung Regiment and later became the [magji](#). The talk mainly centered on the mass walkout staged by the [Drongdrag](#) soldiers from the regimental battalion headquarters and their coming to Lhasa to seek leave for good. Rupön Ngabö went to stop them at Chamgo [tib. chab sgo] but was unsuccessful. The soldiers said that they want to make their appeal near the main gate of [Norbulinga](#). He sent a deputy to talk to the soldiers. Then the [Drongdrag](#) were granted permission to leave the regiment for good. However, I do not know all these details very clearly. They were asked to return back to their regiment, but instead they came to Lhasa.

Q

I do not think they were ordered to return to their regiment.

A

When the news that the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment had returned to Lhasa was received by the Tsondu and the Kashag, they said that they should act fast. They must send monk guards, Gyakag [tib. rgya khag?] since the gold and silver and the mint and arsenal were situated

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in [Trapchi](#) and it could not be left there unguarded. Suppose a large group of people made an attempt to take over the mint and the arsenal? We had to post the monk guards there.

So the Tsondu decided to send the Trungtsi officials to the Kashag to find out whether the Gyakag should be posted or not? Jangra told me that in the Kashag [Trimön](#) said that the situation is not so bad so the 'Gyagag' should not be called. He instructed them to summon the [depön](#) of the Gusung Regiment. There were about 1,000 soldiers in the Regiment and he was told to take the half of them to the [Trapchi](#) Office.

Q

I think it was 500.

A

No, I think it was 1,000. About 500 soldiers were sent to [Trapchi](#) and they were to be given proper arms and ammunition and ordered to shoot anyone coming to the site without proper authority. If such order had not been issued, the situation could have become very chaotic [tib. ther tshal sbar tshal]. This talk came from the soldier's side and the [depön](#) said that he rode a horse and went to [Trapchi](#) to take the soldiers. The day after the [Drongdrag](#) took their leave, the talk about Kujar came up and I heard [Lungshar](#) too made lot of statements.

Then Jamön Depa [tib. byams smon sde pa] of [Sera Je](#) [tib. byes] and the monk from [Sera Me](#) [tib. smad] nicknamed 'the big horse' (tib. Tiki chak [ti pi cag]) and many other people went to the Kashag to get clarification about their doubts concerning the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. They asked the Kashag whether they knew about the doubts and the Kashag said something like we did not know. Actually, the Kashag had sent the Ex-Ganden Tripa, [tib. khri pa] Trisur Rinpoche [tib. khri zur rin po che] and the [Yongdzin](#) Phurchok [tib. phur bu mchog] Rinpoche to the Dalai Lama to request him to live longer about a day before the Dalai Lama passed away. There were a lot of statements which said that they were not allowed to enter his chamber.

Q

Didn't they go to perform the Phagtö [tib. 'phags bstod] prayer?

A

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Was it? People said that when they asked permission near the gate of the Dalai Lama's room that was called Chime Chokyi [tib. 'chi med mchog skyid] to seek his audience, they were not allowed to enter the room. This was what the majority were saying, though I was not there. Then after few days, they probably arrested Kujar.

Q

Mr. Taring told me something about that. He said that when the [Drongdrag](#) staged a walkout, it was on a Saturday. Yuthok [tib. g.yu thog] was the main Depön. After reporting to him, Taring and Yuthok went to [Norbulinga](#). They found that the soldiers had already reached there. The gate was closed and the soldiers did not move aside. The Depön of the [Drongdrag](#) arrived with the Depön of the Gusung Regiment and when the gate was unlocked for them to enter, the soldiers also rushed in. When the 2 Depön went to the Kashag to report about the desertions, the soldiers were also there. The Kashag gave orders to shoot anyone coming [to Trapchi], so they didn't have anything to do and returned to [Trapchi](#) and mounted the bren guns. Why was that?

A

I do not think it happened like that because I have not heard that they returned to [Trapchi](#).

Q

I heard that most of the troops refused to return and instead went to Lhasa. In Lhasa, they pitched a tent at Lubug Nagder [tib. klu sbug na sder] and just roamed around without doing anything. They stayed like that for about a week without food. Many of them did not return, but on staying there, the new guards started shooting as they were ordered. Now, why was it?

A

I do not know whether they were really fired upon.

Q

What was the reason to give orders to shoot on sight?

A

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That was because they thought that the people might rush [tib. lug] in to [Trapchi](#) where the mint and arsenal were located. The [Trapchi](#) Office and [the [Drongdrag](#) headquarters] were joined together. During Kujar's time, the arsenal had been shifted from the Potala to [Trapchi](#). Probably they thought that in case the arsenal fell into the wrong hands, there might be chaos in the country. Jangra told me these possibilities. These were the reasons for giving the order to shoot whoever came.

Q

If they had given this order they might have shot whoever came there, right?

A

However, I didn't hear about whether there was any shooting or not.

Q

I am told that shots were fired.

A

After about a week or two, Kujar was finished.

Q

It is very clear that [Lungshar](#) was responsible for getting the [Drongdrag](#) disbanded. The presence of many of people from [Tsang](#) [in it] was a clear indication. Do you think that the "orders to shoot on sight" was also manipulated by [Lungshar](#)? Was there a fear that the soldiers of [Drongdrag](#) might rise in rebellion?

A

I feel that the Kashag saw the danger that unless a strong guard was posted at [Trapchi](#), a mob might storm [Trapchi](#) and in the process rob the gold and silver blaming the crowd. [Sendregasum](#) also said that they are going to post monks [as guards].

Q

It was not really [Sendregasum](#). It was just said that they were going to be monks from [Sera Me](#).

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A

Probably, it was the [gyakag](#).

Q

This was the [gyakag](#) of [Sera Me](#).

A

Oh I see! Anyway, the Kashag thought that something would happen blaming things here and there. I also wrote it in my book.

Q

Normally, in the Tsondu [hragdu gyepa](#), only the abbots and ex-abbots could attend and no one else was permitted so how did the monks nicknamed Tiki chag and Jamön Depa manage to attend this meeting?

A

I cannot tell you how they attended the meeting. I wonder how he managed that. Jamön Depa was one of the most important persons during [Shatra](#) Lönchen's [tib. bshad sgra blon chen] time. During the Simla Agreement, he was one of the key figures. Later on, he became Lungshar's main spokesman. He was a well educated person. I do not know much about Tiki chag. I heard he was the [Damji](#), and was a monastic official in Sera Monastery. I wonder how they were able to attend that meeting. It was not a Tsondu gyendzom. I am sure that it was the Tsondu [hragdu gyepa](#).

I had yet to join the government service, so I did not know much. By that time Kujar had already been arrested. Then, before the Dalai Lama's body was taken up to the Potala, a last audience was permitted in [Norbulinga](#). I went to pay my respects. The body was attired in a dress called Wangche [tib. dbang chas] with the [hat](#) called Rignga [tib. riga lnga] that had five parts and only the face was covered. His body was propped up on the throne. All the Shapes were dressed in a purple brocade called Tsönmen [tib. tshon man]. As for their hats, they were wearing the fox fur [hat](#) "Wakil" [tib. wa 'khyil] without the crest. I think the Prime Minister was probably wearing a Tsönmen and standing by with tears in his eyes. To the left and right side of the body his regular three Chief Personal Attendants who were in charge of serving food, clothes and religious offerings, (tib. the

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Sösım Chösum [gsol gzim mchod gsum]), the [drönyerchemmo](#) and the [simgag](#) [tib. gzim 'gag] were there with grief and tears in their eyes.

Q

Was the [drönyerchemmo](#) not present?

A

I think the acting [drönyerchemmo](#) was present. People were queuing up in a line to pay their last homage. There were lot of soldiers and civilians. Besides me in the line, there was a man crying loudly. I was wondering who he could be? Later, I found out that he was the late Dalai Lama's driver who was called Motor Babu. After 1-2 days, I heard that the body was brought to the Potala and they did the corpse ritual [tib. gdung chog] there. The remains were kept in [Norbulinga](#) for a couple of days.

Q

The Kujar problem arose just before the Dalai Lama's divination [tib. thugs dam] was over?

A

That is correct. However, I cannot tell you how long the divination lasted.

Q

What was the reason or cause of the drönyerchemmo's death?

A

The [drönyerchemmo](#) and the Düwa Khenpo [tib. 'dul ba mkhan po] of Drepung died at night. According to the popular rumors in Lhasa, it was said that probably their lives were taken away by either the deity known as Mahakala (tib. Gampo [mgon po]) in [Norbulinga](#) or Tsimara [tib. tsi dmar ba]. They [the one's who died suddenly] were among the ones who denounced Kujar. This was the talk from the people who were pro-Kujar. I do not know much. According to my late uncle, one night he just gave a shout and vomited. They summoned a doctor living in Lhalukor [tib. lha klu skor]. By the time the doctor arrived, he was dead. The Lhasa people said that the cause of his death was very similar to the drönyerchemmo's, a sudden pain and death the next moment. I think he was called the

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Düwa Khenpo but I am definite that an abbot passed away. Actually, when they were insisting and talking about arresting Kujar, Drönyerchemmo Kogpa was not there.

Q

Did Geshe Sherab [tib. dge bshes shes rab] compose a verse which seemed to have aroused suspicion and doubts? [I mean] the verse which went as follows: The sun of the Buddhas (Dalai Lama) passed to the realm of the Buddha. Drönyerchemmo was invited as a guest from the south. All people liked Kunphel Dawa. [tib. rgyal ba'i nyi ma rgyal ba'i dbyings su gshegs/ mgron gnyer chen mo lho nas mgron du bos/. Kun 'phel zla ba kun gyis mnyes pa'i yul.] I forgot the fourth line. I heard that he wrote the verse and hung it where he lived. After that, people who were interested in poems copied this verse and it is still around.

A

This verse seems to refer to a hidden plot in the whole affair. That is strange. Yes, there was talk like this. I can only tell you about how the 13th Dalai Lama passed away.

Q

Another thing I would like to ask you is that you said regarding a helper for the Prime Minister, there were many suggestions made like he should be assisted by a Lama or a monk and lay official together [tib. drung skya ser]. Another faction suggested that temporarily he should work along with the Kashag. Was this suggestion about having a Lama as the Regent among the first ones to be put forward?

A

Yes, probably it was among the first ones to be suggested. Then Chalu said [answer not finished]

Q

Was there the talk about the Lama at the beginning?

A

I heard that it was at the beginning.

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Q

There was another verse. Some say it was probably written by Geshe Chödrag-La [tib. chos grags lags]. I don't remember the verse, but it implied that since Lungshar's supporters from Sera like the Jamön Depa and Tiki chag were becoming very powerful in the Tsondu, the verse was written suggesting that a monk should hold the Regency and this came out later on.

A

Yes, they might have made a riddle. Since I was not there and my source of information was [Sawang](#) Trimön, Trekhang and other people from our own side. I cannot claim my information to be the only authentic one. After Kujar's arrest, my late uncle never went to office. I think he was feeling sad and low and his health was also failing. He had also some problems with his arm, it would swell up every now and then.

Q

Was it because of his close connection with Kujar that he felt unsafe to resume his office in the Kashag?

A

I think he must have thought something like that. My late uncle (Trekhang) had close ties with Kujar, and sometimes they would travel together in a motor car. My late uncle had made quite a name for himself in Kham area. He would receive letters directly from the late Dalai Lama.

Q

If he was friendly with Kujar, [Lungshar](#) and his group would be very hostile towards him. On the top of that, he was also quite close to [Trimön](#) and this would further enrage them.

A

The way I see it, [Trimön](#) was neutral. I had never seen him siding with Kujar's group.

Q

It seemed like he had no leanings towards Kujar.

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A

Later on, the confrontation between [Lungshar](#) and Trimon developed because Trimon was becoming very powerful, but at that particular period, I saw Trimon as a neutral force. My brother, who later became the Changji, was an ordinary lay official. When we went to visit Trimon he would say, "Now you boys, do not be show-offish or go around poking your nose in other people's affairs and do not do any crazy things without understanding them." He would advise us like that. Looking at such advice and his general way of handling the situation, I can only conclude that he was a neutral force.

Q

Through observation, I also feel that Trimon maintained a neutral position till most of the responsibilities fell on his shoulder since the Regent (Reting) and Prime Minister (Langdön) were both young and inexperienced. Being among the senior-most [Kalön](#), he had to eventually take sides. Till that time, he did not side with [Lungshar](#) nor with Kujar. Even when the [Drongdrag](#) Regiment deserted [Trapchi](#), he only ordered the soldiers of the Gusung Regiment to be stationed there and did nothing which would indicate that he was supporting any particular group.

A

I think Trimon handled the [Drongdrag](#) situation very well. If he had not ordered the Gusung Regiment to be posted at [Trapchi](#), and then further order them to shoot any unauthorized person on sight, the situation could have turned into a very ugly scene. Kung Liushar [tib. sne'u shar] also told me that Trimon saved the day with his strong stand and furthermore he maintained a neutral outlook. Otherwise, the people, the monks or the soldiers would have come there to rob things.

Q

Just as I told you, on the top, there were only the two kids.

A

My late uncle, the [Trunyichemmo](#), was definitely on Kujar's side. He was a very powerful figure. While serving as the Changji, he would receive direct letters from the Dalai Lama. We have seen these with our own eyes. He was very powerful and if an outsider looked

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on, it would seem that the Governor of Chamdo had no power at all. The late Ngabö was the Governor of Chamdo. When Ngabö died, he was asked to become the Governor General of both Chamdo and the Northern Region. [tib. mdo smad byang rgyud yongs kyi spyi 'doms] He declined to go Chamdo and instead stayed at Riwoche. Therefore, all the 4th Ranking officials, the Khenjung and the representatives of various monasteries had to go up to Riwoche. The monk nicknamed Tiki chak was then among the Representatives of the three great monastery in Chamdo.

Q

Did the Doji have a representative from the monastic order?

A

During that time, Tiki chak with his Apdru attendants left for Chamdo. I remember a big man who was pointed out to me as Tiki chak would come to report to my late uncle. From Chamdo, it was a night's journey to Riwoche. They would come to report and then leave the next morning back for Chamdo. Those days the Dalai Lama used to be very popular and powerful and my late uncle was also very famous and well known. When he received an order from the center to demote a [depön](#), he would do it at once. I think because of all these reasons, when the Dalai Lama passed away and Kujar was arrested, my late uncle stopped going to his office.

Q

Later on, there was no one who said anything against him.

A

That was true. Then he took sick leave and said he was going on a home leave [to his estate] and left for Lhoka. He insisted on taking me along with him. Later on, he returned and served the government.

Q

Then he resided in Lhoka?

A

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Yes. He resided in Lhoka, but sometimes he would come to Lhasa. Later on he resigned from the position of [Trunyichemmo](#) and served as a Khenche. He was a very highly learned person and he was also a very firm person. While he was serving as the Governor General of Chamdo, I saw how he operated. Normally, when a person becomes the Governor of the North or Eastern regions, he would make lots of money, but my late uncle would finish all the money he had and many a time he was on the verge of taking loans. In Kham, when a new officer took over from the previous one, all the people come to him to re-endorse [tib. 'go mchan] any permission they had already been granted, bringing yaks and [dri](#) and gifts with them. My uncle would never accept these gifts saying that they had already been granted permission by the government so there was no need for him to re-endorse them. He would also say that to accept such gifts was not proper and it would leave behind a bad name for him. Then the [depön](#) would also try to butter him up in order to gain favors.

Q

Why did the [depön](#) have to flatter Trekhang, the [Trunyichemmo](#)?

A

Because they feared him. Shasur was one of them. My late uncle was very fond of horses, so Shasur would come bringing fodder as a gift. When my uncle would go to their place, Shasur would pitch tents even for the horses. All the [depön](#) became 'Yes men', trying to flatter him by saying what would please him. If Shasur had come when they had to meet at the office, my late uncle would ask him to stay. Otherwise, I have never seen my uncle ask anyone else to stay. Shasur was related to us. Janglojen, Surkhang and Kusangtse [tib. kun bzang rtse] were frequent visitors, but they would never be invited to stay unless they were on government errands. Janglojen was amazed at his work. He was a very strict disciplinary. He served as the Governor General of Northern region and Kham area at the same time. He worked with Tsarong when they made the new currency notes in [Trapchi](#). Later on, although he had not resigned completely, he would not take an active part. He worked in the Namgen [tib. rnam gan] Treasury. After the Dalai Lama's death, he never attended a single official ceremony so he lived a semi-retired life. He passed away 13 years after the Dalai Lama expired.

Q

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How old was Kujar?

A

He seemed very young, but he looked older than us. When we returned from Kham, we had made two photo albums of all the photographs we took while in the Kham area - disguised as First Aid Teachers. The album was made out of Bhutanese paper - made into an album. One album was taken by my late uncle on his first audience. The other I sent through Kujar to be presented to the Dalai Lama. He took it up to the palace. On that day, my late uncle had a private audience in the living quarters [tib. gzim chung] [of the Dalai Lama]. As he went up to the living quarters, I waited at my usual waiting place. I offered a white [khata](#) at the northern gate of living quarters that was known as Kelsang Dekyi. Later my uncle came down when the audience was over. Kujar gave me some cookies [tib. bzhes spro] and fruits wrapped up in a checkered cloth with a red seal on. That is all. No audience for me. Whatever I wanted to report to the Dalai Lama, I did it through my late uncle and not through Kujar. My reports from Kham were sent directly to the Dalai Lama. I was sent with 2 cameras and the photos I took were very good. During Reting's reign, I was appointed to take the photographs of the 14th Dalai Lama.

Q

Did you accomplish your duty?

A

I am not sure, but then I took good photos.

Q

Then the Kashag and the Prime Minister jointly presided over the country for about 2 months, right?

A

I think so. I cannot remember the exact period.

Q

Then Reting Rinpoche was enthroned.

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A

There were 3 names suggested for the regency: Reting, Phurbuchog [tib. phur bu mchog] Rinpoche and Tri Rinpoche Minyag Ami [tib. mi nyag a mes]

Q

Was that Trisur [tib. khri zur] Rinpoche?

A

Trisur Rinpoche was the person who conducted the rolling of the [senriy](#) lottery.

Q

Had Trisur Rinpoche been told beforehand that he would conduct the [senriy](#) and read out the name at once?

A

I do not know. I heard that the [senriy](#) was opened on the same day and Reting Rinpoche's name came out.

Q

Before Reting's name came out, there was some talk - maybe Trekhang or someone said that - was Reting Rinpoche born in the Bird Year? It was said that a person born in the Bird Year would come out?

A

I think nothing like that was said, but actually I have no information about it.

Q

After Reting assumed power, the Kyichog Kündü party was formed, right?

A

That is true. I had already joined government service.

Q

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There was talk that before the Dalai Lama passed away, he had left instructions that Reting should become the Regent. Before his death, he had visited Reting Monastery and left instructions that Reting should succeed him as the Regent. Was it true?

A

It was true that he visited Reting, since my late uncle was [Tseja](#). He went with the Dalai Lama as his attendant. Later on, he told me that there were many juniper trees in Reting. The Dalai Lama put a mark indicating the east juniper [tib. shar rtags] on some of the trees and cut them down to be used as the core (tib. sogshing [srog shing]) for the tomb where the Dalai Lama's remains would be kept. When this tree was brought to Lhasa, it was almost a perfect fit except a difference of a few fingers. My late uncle told me like that. However, I cannot vouch for it. In any case, the Dalai Lama definitely visited Reting before he passed away, but I cannot tell you what instructions he had left behind.

Q

Had Reting invited the Dalai Lama or what?

A

I didn't know about that.